

Message Text

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UNCLAS VIENTIANE 0567

FROM USDEL HANOI

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP OREP SOPN US VN

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION PRESS CONFERENCE IN HANOI

HANOI 003

PRESS CONFERENCE - MARCH 18, 1977, 1700 HOURS, HANOI, VIETNAM.

LEONARD WOODCOCK, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION
FOLLOWING STATEMENT MADE BE MR. WOODCOCK:

ON BEHALF OF COMMISSION SENT BY PRESIDENT CARTER TO
SEEK INFORMATION ABOUT AMERICANS MISSING IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA, I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE THANKS TO
GOVERNMENT OF SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM FOR ITS
KIND WELCOME AND GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY. WE HAVE HAD
DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH VIETNAMESE DELEGATION LED BY
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DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN AS WELL AS SERIOUS
TALKS WITH PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN DONG AND DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DUY TRINH.
ALL OF THESE MEETINGS WERE POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE.

IN COURSE OF THESE MEETINGS, VIETNAMESE HAVE IN-
FORMED US THAT THEY ARE GIVING US REMAINS OF TWELVE AMER-

ICAN SERVICEMEN. THEY WILL BE FLOWN OUT OF VIETNAM WITH COMMISSION. WE WELCOME THIS POSITIVE STEP BY VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE ALSO ESTABLISHED A MECHANISM FOR PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OUR MISSING MEN.

VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT RAISED MATTERS OF CONCERN TO IT, INCLUDING QUESTION OF POSTWAR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM U.S.

A FULL REPORT ON ALL ASPECTS OF OUR TALKS WILL BE MADE TO PRESIDENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER WE RETURN.

COMMISSION BELIEVES ITS VISIT HAS HELPED VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY VIEWS OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. WE HOPE AND BELIEVE OUR VISIT HAS STARTED A PROCESS WHICH WILL IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR NORMALIZING U.S.-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS IN FUTURE.

QUESTION: MR. WOODCOCK, I UNDERSTAND THAT DELEGATION GOING TO LAOS TOMORROW. DOES THIS MEAN NEW ADMINISTRATION HAS SHIFTED FROM POSITION OF MR. KISSINGER'S THAT VIETNAM MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL SERVICEMEN MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA?

ANSWER: OUR INSTRUCTIONS ARE TO RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE GOVERNMENTS WE ARE DEALING WITH AND OUR PRIMARY EMPHASIS TO LAO GOVERNMENT WILL BE WITH REGARD TO TERRITORY THEY ADMINISTER.

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QUESTION: MR. WOODCOCK, DID THE AMERICAN COMMISSION DISCUSS WITH VIETNAMESE ANY AMERICAN AID TO VIETNAM FINANCIAL OR OTHERWISE?

ANSWER: WE RECEIVED VIEWS EXPRESSED VERY STRONGLY BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. IT IS BEYOND OUR COMPETENCE TO NEGOTIATE ON THESE QUESTIONS. THOSE WERE OUR INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT. OUR TASK WAS TO RECEIVE VIEWS OF GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM ON ALL SUBJECTS FOR PURPOSE OF CONVEYING THEM TO PRESIDENT ON OUR RETURN.

QUESTION: ARE YOU SATISFIED THAT ALL INFORMATION THAT VIETNAMESE HAVE ON MISSING AMERICANS HAS NOW BEEN GIVEN OR WILL SHORTLY BE GIVEN TO U.S.?

ANSWER: WE BELIEVE THE MECHANISM THAT HAS BEEN SET UP BY GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM WILL PERMIT RESOLUTION OF THIS

PROBLEM IN A SATISFACTORY FASHION AND WE ACCEPT IN GOOD FAITH THAT THESE MATTERS WILL BE HANDLED PROPERLY AND I THINK IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE.

QUESTION: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT FAMILIES OF MISSING MEN WILL BE AS SATISFIED AS AMERICAN GOVERNMENT WITH THIS ARRANGEMENT?

ANSWER: AS FAR AS FAMILIES OF MISSING MEN ARE CONCERNED, WITH EXCEPTION OF TWELVE REMAINS WHICH WILL BE GOING BACK AS A RESULT OF THEIR BEING TURNED OVER BY GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM, WE MUST RELY UPON FUTURE FOR RESOLUTION OF SPECIFIC CLAIMS THAT WE WILL PUT FORWARD.

QUESTION: CAN WE ASK THE COMMISSION WHAT MECHANISM IS THAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED?

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ANSWER: SIMPLY, THAT AS SPECIFIC CLAIMS ARE MADE, THEY WILL BE HANDLED EXPEDITIOUSLY AND DETERMINATION MADE IF INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AND IF INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, WHAT MAY BE DONE RELATIVE TO MATTER.

QUESTION: IS THAT IN THE NATURE OF AN ASSURANCE BY GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM OR IS THERE SOME FORM OF VERIFICATION OF AMERICAN PARTICIPATION?

ANSWER: THIS WOULD TAKE THE FORM OF AN ASSURANCE FROM GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM.

QUESTION: CAN WE ASK REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY HIS OPINION ON THE DISCUSSIONS AND EVENTS TODAY?

ANSWER: IF CHAIRMAN HAS NO OBJECTION, I WOULD SAY THAT I THOUGHT MEETING TODAY PERTAINED TO GATHERING OF INFORMATION ON THE MIA'S AND WORKING WITH VIETNAMESE MIA COMMISSION, IN MY OPINION, IT WAS VERY CONSTRUCTIVE AND IN FUTURE THE U.S. WILL BE WORKING WITH THIS COMMISSION. MY OWN PERSONAL OPINION IS THAT THERE ARE NO AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL STILL BEING HELD AS CAPTIVE, THAT THEY WERE RELEASED IN 1973. IT IS MY PERSONAL OPINION THAT NO AMERICAN CIVILIANS ARE BEING HELD IN PRISON OR AS CAPTIVES IN VIETNAM. HOWEVER, IN MY OPINION THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT THERE COULD BE A VERY FEW AMERICAN DESERTERS OR RALLIERS WHO DO NOT WANT TO COME BACK TO THE U.S.

QUESTION: REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY, A FOLLOW UP

QUESTION: DID YOU COME TO THESE CONCLUSIONS AS A
RESULT OF WHAT YOU LEARNED HERE IN HANOI?

ANSWER: I HAVE COME TO THESE CONCLUSIONS AS A RESULT OF
MY OVER FIFTEEN MONTH PERIOD PLUS MY VISIT TO HANOI.
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QUESTION: WAS THERE ANY DISCUSSION OF ANY INDIVIDUAL
CASES OF REPORTS OF AMERICANS BEING ALIVE IN VIETNAM
OTHER THAN RALLIERS AND DESERTERS?

ANSWER: WE HAVE TURNED OVER INDIVIDUAL CASES TO THE
VIETNAMESE COMMISSION. THEY HAVE INFORMED US THEY WILL
TRY TO FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THESE AMERICANS.

QUESTION: ARE YOU TAKING WITH YOU ANYTHING IN ADDITION
TO TWELVE REMAINS, OTHER NAMES, ID CARDS, DOG TAGS?

ANSWER: A REQUEST WAS MADE BUT NO, WE ARE NOT TAKING
BACK ANYTHING ADDITIONAL AT THIS TIME.

QUESTION: IS THIS SUFFICIENT THEN FOR A FAVORABLE REPORT
TO PRESIDENT CARTER?

ANSWER: WE WILL COMPOSE OUR REPORT AND GIVE IT TO PRESI-
DENT AND MAKE NO COMMENT ABOUT THAT REPORT UNTIL WE HAVE
GIVEN IT TO PRESIDENT.

QUESTION: HOW ABOUT RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. IN
FUTURE, WHEN AND WHERE NEGOTIATIONS BY TWO COUNTRIES
WILL BE ORGANIZED? FOR EXAMPLE, HAS PRESIDENT CARTER
INVITED VIETNAMES DELEGATION TO GO TO WASHINGTON?

ANSWER: WE WILL MAKE OUR REPORT TO PRESIDENT CARTER
ON ALL THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN CONVEYED TO US BY
REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM AND BASED ON
THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL MAKE THE DECISION ON WHAT FURTHER
ACTION WILL BE TAKEN BY USG.

QUESTION: HAVE YOU REQUESTED GOVERNMENT OF KAMPUCHEA
TO GO THERE?

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ANSWER: NO, WE HAVE NOT.

QUESTION: DO YOU CONSIDER RESULTS THAT HAVE
BEEN ACHIEVED AND ATMOSPHERE OF THE TALKS
THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE CONDUCIVE TO REMOVING OBSTACLES TO
NORMALIZATION?

ANSWER: I THINK TALKS HAVE BEEN VERY CONSTRUCTIVE AND
VERY GOOD AND IT IS MY BELIEF THAT WE ARE IN PROCESS
OF REMOVING THE BEGINNING OBSTACLES IN PATH TO
NORMALIZATION. END.
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